

What Predicts Wholeheartedness in Romantic Relationships?

Honors Research Thesis

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by

Alexandra Elise Black

The Ohio State University

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Project Advisor: Dr. Jennifer Crocker, PhD

Department of Psychology

Abstract

Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006) proposed a model of risk regulation in romantic relationships, suggesting that people balance the goal of wanting to minimize pain and rejection with the goal of wanting to draw closer to their partner. Crocker and Canevello (2015) suggested that this model of risk regulation describes relationships in the egosystem, and wholeheartedness, a construct proposed by Brené Brown (2010a), might provide an alternative approach to risk regulation in the ecosystem. The present study examines a sample of 83 romantically involved couples who completed measures of self-protectiveness and wholeheartedness along with other constructs hypothesized to relate to them. Multiple regression analyses examined the unique associations of each of these measures with wholeheartedness and self-protectiveness. Results showed that trust and avoidant attachment are the strongest predictors of wholeheartedness. Future research is needed to further examine this construct and its implications for romantic relationships.

Keywords: romantic relationships, wholeheartedness, ego-protection, approach, avoidance

Wholeheartedness: Implications for Increasing

Relationship Health and Longevity

Introduction

Interpersonal relationships are a salient and essential facet of everyday life. Connection with others gives a vital purpose to one's life and fosters the belief that one is good enough to be the recipient of love (Brown, 2010b). To create these close relationships, however, one must be open to the possibility of being hurt. Thus, people must learn how to balance two distinct goals: the goal of protecting oneself from pain and rejection with the goal of drawing close to one's partner (Murray, 2006). The risk-regulation model, developed by Murray (2006) describes how people manage these two goals. Research has examined the mechanisms of risk-regulation. However, little quantitative research has examined an alternative approach to romantic relationships.

Risk Regulation Model of Relationships

The risk-regulation model describes two conflicting, yet equally motivating, relationship-contingent goals. The desire to protect oneself from pain and disappointment contends with the desire to fulfill one's innate needs for belonging and connectedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In order to have an optimal relationship, one's ego-protective goals are pushed to the background (Simpson, 1987). This increases both the possibility of rejection and pain from losing one's partner.

The risk-regulation model hypothesizes that people balance these goals by maximizing the amount of assurance, or security, that they feel in their romantic relationship (Murray, 2006). Affective, cognitive, and behavioral mechanisms regulate how dependent on their partners people are willing to be. One way Murray describes these mechanisms is one's perceptions of their perceived partner's regard and support for them. If a person feels sufficiently supported by

their partner's positive regard for them, then they will feel safe enough to focus on promoting the relationship. However, it is key to note that in this risk-regulation model, people only draw close when they are *assured* that they will not get hurt.

Alternative Explanation

Brown (2010a) proposed an alternative relational approach, known as wholeheartedness. Brown (2010b) further explained this concept in a Ted Talk entitled, "The Power of Vulnerability." She described wholehearted people as having a few distinct qualities in common. According to Brown, wholehearted people have the *courage* to tell the story of who they truly are to their partner, the *courage* to be imperfect, *authenticity*, and they *fully embrace vulnerability*. This depicts an individual who is their authentic self and is willing to embrace their imperfections in order to draw closer to their partners. Crocker and Canevello (2015) developed a measure of this construct, which includes statements such as, "I was willing to open myself to the possibility of being hurt in order to create a close relationship," and "I felt I'd rather love and risk being hurt than protect myself by not giving love a chance."

The aim of this thesis is to create a better understanding of the concept of wholeheartedness and discover which dispositional traits are associated with displaying this relational approach.

Dispositional Traits Predictive of Wholeheartedness

Three theoretical accounts have been identified as possible predictors of the construct of wholeheartedness. These conceptual models include the sense of self, relationship contingent mechanisms, and global personality factors.

Sense of Self Conceptual Model

Self-esteem is an important contributor to the pursuit of a person's goals. People that are high in self-esteem are more likely to continue on when facing difficulties than people low in self-esteem (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohns, 2003; McFarlin, Baumeister, & Blascovich, 1984). This concept of goal-seeking behavior can be seen in the larger self-regulation model. This model recognizes that individuals try to minimize discrepancies between one's current state and their desired goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Successful self-regulation is when an individual focuses on their most important goals; they see any setback as a positive opportunity to learn instead of a failure (Crocker, Brook, Niiya, & Villacorta, 2006). This is important because one's evaluation of their self-esteem can directly impact their self-regulation in relationships. Murray, Derrick, and Leder (2008) found that those who are higher in self-esteem will initiate more dependence on their partners in times of risk, whereas those low in self-esteem will prioritize protecting themselves in the face of a relational threat. This has implications for how individuals will approach their relational goals and difficulties and in how their current self-esteem will enhance or diminish the success of their self-regulation. It is therefore hypothesized that those who are high in self-esteem will also be high in wholeheartedness.

When an ego-protective individual senses that they will be hurt or rejected by their partner, they reduce dependency and instead focus on themselves (Murray et al., 2008). They are motivated to avoid situations where their needs will not be fulfilled, whereas a wholehearted person will use this situation to grow closer to their partner (Murray et al., 2008; Crocker & Canevello, 2015). Wholehearted people have an emotional buffer from the possibility of hurt and continue on in their relationship. This idea is epitomized in the construct of resiliency. Resiliency

is the ability of an individual to cope and persevere in the face of adversity and failure (Connor & Davidson, 2003). This aids in a person's decision to either self-protect in the face of a risk, or push forward for the health of the relationship. It is hypothesized that those who are high in resiliency will also be high in wholeheartedness.

A child's attachment style to their caregiver is highly correlated with their future adult relationships (Locke, 2008). Within a romantic couple, attachment style can also affect how communication is facilitated during times of conflict (Domingue & Mollen, 2009). Times of conflict are known to be crucial to understanding relationship longevity. An ego-protective individual sees conflict as a threatening situation and will pull away from their partner (Murray, 2006). However, a wholehearted person will see the conflict as an opportunity to draw closer to their partner (Crocker & Canevello, 2015). A person's attachment style is determined by how they view the self in relation to others and is important to gaining insight into their sense of self. An anxious or avoidant attachment style is hypothesized to be negatively correlated with wholeheartedness whereas secure attachment style is predicted to be positively correlated with wholeheartedness.

Relationship Orientation Model

In close relationships, people act as if their partner's actions are a part of themselves; this is a fusion of partner and self (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 2004). People look for attributes in their partner that they cannot find in themselves. In Aron and Aron's (1986) self-expansion model, people are motivated in close relationships to include their partner's characteristics in mental representations of the self. This cognitive process shapes relationship contingent thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Aron et al., 2004). Those who see their partner as included in their self-concept should place priority on the growth of their relationship. They also place their

partner on the same level of importance as themselves. A positive association with inclusion of other in the self and wholeheartedness is predicted.

People with relational self-concepts report being more committed to their important relationships and feel closer to their partners (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000). They also take into consideration others' desires and needs while making decisions. Research has shown that relationally interdependent people rate their partners as more responsive to their needs and rate their relationships as more positive. This implies that people with highly relational self-concepts place their partners before themselves and have a positive outlook on their partner. A positive association between one's relational-interdependent self-construal and wholeheartedness is predicted.

People with relationship contingent self-esteem see successes or failures in the relationship as reflecting their worth as a human being (Crocker & Knight, 2005). Relationship contingent self-esteem affects romantic relationships by the individual seeing success or failure in the relationship as reflective of the self (Knee et al., 2008). Contingent self-esteem itself can motivate people to invest effort into pursuing their goals (Crocker & Knight, 2005). People with relationship contingent self-esteem not only invest their sense of self in the relationship, but also base their self-regard on the outcome of the relationship. Individuals high in this relationship behavior are therefore highly invested and sensitive to the health of their relationship. It is hypothesized that relationship contingent self-esteem will be positively predictive of wholeheartedness.

The construct of trust originates within attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). This is the idea that a person has security and certainty in another's actions based on the foundation of their relationship (Fletcher et al., 2000). Trust is a major contributor to satisfaction in relationships.

Trust correlates with the other main determinants in Fletcher et al.'s model of perceived relationship quality including the factors of relationship satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, passion, and love. These correlates are associated with the approach mechanism found within wholeheartedness. It is therefore hypothesized that those who are more trusting in their partner will also display wholeheartedness.

Compassionate goals are defined as interpersonal goals to be supportive and constructive (Crocker & Canevello, 2015). People with compassionate goals have ecosystem motivations, giving equal importance to others' needs and their own. They will therefore be more likely to place their relationship's needs over their own. It is hypothesized that people with compassionate goals display signs of wholeheartedness.

Global Personality Model

Few personality scales are as well known as the Big Five for identifying the most salient personality factors. The Big Five gives direct insight into an individual's personality and also has subscales that are related to one's interpersonal style. These constructs were included in the personality model because they show how one's disposition leads them to act in their romantic life. For example, a specific facet of neuroticism is vulnerability, which is closely tied with wholeheartedness (Shaver & Brennan, 1992). Vulnerable people are characteristically more likely to break down and feel the need to depend on others, but only *if* they allow their vulnerable side to be seen. Individuals who are high in neuroticism should therefore be high in ego-protection. In the Big Five, extraversion is seen as an interpersonal trait that is divided into warmth, gregariousness, and assertiveness. It is hypothesized that high extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (the four "positive" big five traits)

will be related to wholeheartedness; neuroticism is predicted to be negatively associated with wholeheartedness.

Positive and negative affects have been identified as the two main dimensions of emotional experience (Clark & Watson, 1999). People in satisfying relationships turn negatives into positives and experience more positive feelings towards their partner (Murray, 2006). This appraisal system is key to the risk regulation model. The PANAS-X is an extended measure that provides both a reliable and valid measure of a person's affective state. This is included in the personality model to see how a person's typical emotional state will affect their relationships. It is hypothesized that the composite of positive affect will be correlated with wholeheartedness and the composite of negative affect will not. Reverse correlations are also possibilities.

In a study by Clark et al. (1987), those who scored higher on a measure of communal orientation helped others more than those who scored lower. The more communally oriented participants would increase their helping responses when the other person in the situation was experiencing sadness. This is included in the global personality model because it provides insight into how a person approaches others in social situations. If a person is inclined to keep others in mind, then he or she will be more likely to place their partner over themselves as well. It is hypothesized that those who are higher in communal orientation will also be higher in wholeheartedness.

Method

Participants Eighty-three heterosexual couples (166 participants) participated. Relationship length varied from 19 days to 5.3 years ($M = 1.3$ years, $SD = 1.3$). The majority of participants reported that they were exclusively dating their partner (75%), followed by “close to engagement” (16%), “dating casually” (7%), and married (2%). Most participants reported their

race as White/Caucasian (81.9%), as well as 10.8% as multi-racial or “other,” 6.6 % Hispanic or Latina(o), 4.8% Asian, and 1.2% African American. The age range of the participants was from 18 to 27 years old ($M_{Male} = 19.78$, $SD_{Male} = 1.80$; $M_{Female} = 19.15$, $SD_{Female} = 1.25$). The participants were either given credit for their introductory psychology course or were paid \$40 for their involvement in the study.

Procedure Couples were first asked to complete a 30-minute online measure of individual differences, health, and relationship tendencies that were not necessarily specific to their current romantic relationship. They were then asked to come into the laboratory together for a 2-hour session. The participants were then asked to complete an extensive list of self-report questionnaires. These included measures of wholeheartedness, self-protection, and other constructs hypothesized to be related to both relational approaches. Each individual was then asked to think about a current issue or difficulty in their relationship, describe it, and answer follow-up questions about it. A research assistant then escorted the couple to a room with two comfortable chairs facing each other. They were told that, “For the next part of the study you will have a 10-minute discussion about one of the issues in your relationship you wrote about. We do not expect you to resolve this issue today. Just try to see each other’s point of view. Please try to remain on topic for the full amount of time. I will be back after the 10 minutes is up.” The research assistant selected the problem that was rated by the couple as the most important and having the most disagreement involved and left the room. After the 10-minute discussion was over, the couples were escorted to separate cubicles and were asked questions about the discussion. The study included four phases: Phase 1 (online pretest) to measure a baseline of the characteristics; Phase 2A, a measure prior to the conflict discussion; Phase 2B, a

measure after the conflict discussion; and Phase 4, a follow-up measure 2 months after the initial study was conducted.

Measures In the pre-test online questionnaire, participants were asked to fill out measures of dispositional traits such as self-esteem, the Big Five personality inventory, as well as measures relating to sense of self in the participants. They were then asked to fill out measures that relate to their beliefs and approaches to relationships to measure their baseline relationship orientation. The pre-test questionnaire asked participants to answer based on the previous two weeks, as did the pre-discussion questionnaire. The pre-discussion part of the study asked participants about constructs related to their current relationship, such as the risk regulation scale and current levels of trust. The post-discussion questionnaire asked about their relationship goals and affective states to see how the conflict discussion influenced their relational outlook at the given time. For this thesis's purpose, only data at Phase 1 and Phase 2A were used in the analyses.

The sense of self model was comprised of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and the Anxious and Avoidant Attachment Scale (Brennen, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). To assess relationship contingency, the Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (RISC; Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000), The Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), The Compassionate and Self-Image Goals Scale (Crocker & Canevello, 2008), The Trust In Partner Scale (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), and The Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008) were included in the relationship orientation model. The Big Five Personality Scale (John & Srivastava, 1999), The Positive and

Negative Affect Scale (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994), and the Communal Orientation Scale (Clark, Oullette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987) were used to form the global personality model.

Wholeheartedness was measured in Phase 2A in the modified risk regulation scale adapted by Crocker and Canevello (2015). Statements such as “I’d rather love and risk being hurt than protect myself by not giving love a chance” and “I wanted to give love wholeheartedly, even if it meant I could get hurt” were measured on a 5-point scale of “not at all” to “extremely.” Wholeheartedness was adequately reliable ($\alpha = .81$).

Rosenberg Self Esteem was measured in the online pre-test with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Participants were asked the extent to how they have felt something about themselves over the past two weeks on a scale of 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Statements included items such as: “I felt that I have a number of good qualities,” and “At times I felt I was no good at all.” The scale had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .87$). Construct, concurrent, and predictive validities were established (Rosenberg, 1979).

Anxious and Avoidant Attachment Style was measured in phase 2A using the Anxious and Avoidant Attachment Scale (Brennen, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Participants were asked to reflect on their romantic relationship in the past two weeks and answer statements (e.g. “I’m worried that my partner won’t care about me as much as I care about him/her,” and “I was very comfortable being close to my partner,”) on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The subscales had adequate reliability (anxious: $\alpha = .90$, avoidant: $\alpha = .83$). Validity was established (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007).

Connor-Davidson Resiliency was measured using the Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale (2003) in the online pre-test. The measure started with the statement, “In general I feel that...” Participants were asked to answer these statements (e.g. with a 5-point Likert scale of “strong

disagree” to “strongly agree”). The scale had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .86$). Convergent and divergent validities were established.

Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem was measured in Phase 2A using the scale adapted by Knee, Canevello, Bush, and Cook (2008) that used statements such as, “My feelings of self-worth are based on how well things are going in my relationship” and “I feel better about myself when it seems like my partner and I are emotionally connected” on a 5-point scale of “not at all” to “very much.” The scale had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .87$). Predictive, incremental, convergent, and discriminant validities were established.

Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) was measured in Phase 2A using the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). This scale measures the extent to which a person places their partner as a part of themselves (Aron & Aron, 1986). Participants were asked to choose from a selection of overlapping circles which representation best described their relationship in the past two weeks. Predictive, convergent, and discriminant validities were established (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

Relational Interdependent Self-Construal was measured using the Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (RISC; Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000) in the pre-test online questionnaire. Participants were asked to rank items on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Such items included: “My close relationships are a close reflection of who I am,” and “If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well.” The scale had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .84$). Criterion, convergent, and discriminant validities were established.

Compassionate and Self-Image Goals were measured at Phase 2A by the Compassionate and Self-Image Goals Scale developed by Crocker and Canevello (2008) starting with the statement, “Over the past two weeks, in my romantic relationship, I wanted/tried to...”

Participants were asked to answer items (e.g. “Avoid being selfish or self-centered,” and “Get my partner to do things my way,”) on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The two subscales had adequate reliability (compassionate: $\alpha = .86$, self-image: $\alpha = .88$). Convergent and divergent validities were established.

Trust was assessed at Phase 2A using the Trust in Partners Scale adapted by Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000). Participants were asked to determine how they felt about their partner over the past two weeks on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Items included statements such as, “How much did you trust your partner?” and “How much could you depend on your partner?” Trust had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .81$).

The Big Five was measured in the pre-test online questionnaire with the Big Five Personality Scale (John & Srivastava, 1999). Participants were asked to state how much they agreed to statements reflecting the past two weeks on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items included: “Been original, came up with new ideas,” and “Been tense.” The subscales had adequate reliability (extroversion: $\alpha = .86$, neuroticism: $\alpha = .87$, agreeableness: $\alpha = .76$, conscientiousness: $.78$) excluding openness to experience ($\alpha = .66$). Convergent and discriminant validities were found.

Positive and Negative Affect (PANAS-X) was measured in the online pre-test using the PANAS-X adapted scale (Watson & Clark, 1994). Participants were asked to state the extent that they had felt certain emotions (e.g. “angry” or “guilty”) over the past two weeks. Composite scores of positive and negative affect were used in order to determine one’s overall positive affect level instead of focusing on each individual positive emotion. All of the positive emotions and negative emotions in the PANAS-X were separately averaged to get these composite scores. Both of the subscales had adequate reliability (composite negative emotions: $\alpha = .96$, composite

positive emotions: $\alpha = .95$). Both convergent and discriminant validities were found as well as construct validity (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; Watson & Clark, 1999).

Communal Orientation was measured using the scale by Clark, Oullette, Powell, and Milberg (1987) in the online pre-test. The measure started with the phrase, “Please rate how characteristic each item is of you, using the scale provided.” Participants were asked to select an option based on a five-point scale ranging from “not at all characteristic” to “very characteristic.” The scale had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .76$). Validity was established.

Results

Overview of Analyses. Taking into consideration the interdependence of the couples’ responses, the MIXED command in SPSS was used to analyze the dyadic data in all analyses (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Partial correlations were computed as an indicator of effect size (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991) using the method developed by Gonzalez and Griffin (1999). Social desirability and gender were statistically controlled for in all analyses. Characteristics at Phase 1 and 2A were the independent variables used; wholeheartedness at 2A was the dependent variable in all analyses. Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations of all of the measures included in the analyses.

Testing the sense of self conceptual model. Three scales were hypothesized to be included in the sense of self model: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Connor-Davison Resiliency Scale, and the Anxious and Avoidant Attachment Scale. Bivariate regression analyses were first used to explore the correlations between the factors and wholeheartedness. Self-esteem was not a significant predictor of wholeheartedness (estimate = .09, 95% CI [-.05, .24], $pr = .10$, $p = .212$). Resiliency positively predicted wholeheartedness at 2A (estimate = .41, 95% CI [.13, .68], $pr = .23$, $p < .01$). Anxious attachment was not statistically significant ($p = .810$), but avoidant

attachment did negatively predict wholeheartedness (estimate = $-.58$, 95% CI = $[-.75, -.41]$, $pr = -.47$, $p < .001$). A multiple regression was then calculated of the sense of self model to see which predicted wholeheartedness above and beyond the others. Both resiliency and avoidant attachment style were significant predictors. A partial correlation was calculated for resiliency (estimate = $.48$, 95% CI $[.16, .79]$, $pr = .23$, $p < .01$) and for avoidant attachment style (estimate = $-.61$, 95% CI $[-.78, -.44]$, $pr = -.49$, $p < .001$).

Testing the relationship orientation conceptual model. The five scales included in the relationship orientation model were: The Relational Interdependent Self-Construct Scale, the Inclusion of Other in The Self Scale, the Compassionate and Self-Image Goals Scale, the Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem Scale, and the Trust in Partners Scale. Relational interdependent self-construct positively predicted wholeheartedness at phase 2A (estimate = $.25$, 95% CI = $[.05, .46]$, $pr = .19$, $p < .05$). As did inclusion of other in the self (estimate = $.18$, 95% CI = $[.09, .27]$, $pr = .30$, $p < .001$) and compassionate goals (estimate = $.52$, 95% CI $[.30, .74]$, $pr = .34$, $p < .001$). Self-image goals were not significantly correlated to wholeheartedness. Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem was a positive predictor of wholeheartedness (estimate = $.20$, 95% CI $[.02, .39]$, $pr = .17$, $p < .05$) as well as trust (estimate = $.54$, 95% CI $[.34, .74]$, $pr = .39$, $p < .001$). A multiple regression of the relationship orientation model was then calculated. Partial correlations showed both trust (estimate = $.40$, 95% CI $[.12, .57]$, $pr = .29$, $p < .001$) and compassionate goals (estimate = $.34$, 95% CI $[.19, .62]$, $pr = .24$, $p < .001$) as significant individual predictors of wholeheartedness.

Testing the global personality conceptual model. The three scales hypothesized to be included in the global personality conceptual model were the Big Five scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS-X), and the Communal Orientation Scale. In the initial bivariate

analyses, none of the big five traits were statistically significant. Only the composite of positive affect was significant in the PANAS-X (estimate = .17, 95% CI [.00, .34], $pr = .16$, $p < .05$).

Communal orientation was also positively predictive of wholeheartedness (estimate = .31, 95% CI [.08, .54], $pr = .20$, $p < .05$). A multiple regression of the global personality model was then calculated. Communal orientation was the only significant predictor of wholeheartedness (estimate = .28, 95% CI [.01, .54], $pr = .16$, $p < .05$).

Model of best fit for wholeheartedness The regression analyses were capitalizing on the factors that uniquely account for the majority of variance in the construct of wholeheartedness. To better understand this construct, a model of best fit was calculated with the significant predictors from each conceptual model. This multiple regression was calculated with avoidant attachment style, resiliency, trust, compassionate goals, and communal orientation. Out of these factors, only trust (estimate = .32, 95% CI [.12, .52], $pr = .24$, $p < .01$) and avoidant attachment (estimate = -.37, 95% CI [-.56, -.17], $pr = -.29$, $p < .001$) were unique and significant predictors of wholeheartedness. This shows that only trust and avoidant attachment style predict wholeheartedness above and beyond the other factors in the conceptual models.

Discussion

Murray (2006) proposed the risk-regulation model as an inclusive model explaining how individuals act in romantic relationships. Crocker and Canevello (2015), in contrast, explored compassionate goals as an environment in which a person places his or her partner's needs above their own. This opened up the discussion for alternative approaches to romantic relationships, leading Brown (2010a) to coin the term "wholeheartedness." This was used to describe those who choose developing a fulfilling relationship over protecting themselves from the possibility of getting hurt.

This study has shown that there is an alternative approach other than hypothesized by the risk-regulation model. Wholeheartedness provides for an approach-oriented model in which individuals choose developing a relationship over their self-protective fears. Loving wholeheartedly allows individuals to take the risk necessary to develop a deep bond with another, instead of only pursuing when they are sure that they will not get hurt. To understand wholeheartedness is largely to determine what it takes for an individual to put love first. This has implications for creating relationship health and longevity in romantic dyads. If individuals can learn to love more wholeheartedly, they can create bonds that are more stable and less susceptible to variations in feelings of protectiveness. Now that the strongest predictors of wholeheartedness have been determined, they can be implemented into couples' therapy. Clinicians can focus on increasing trust and helping those who have an avoidant attachment style in order to better sustain the romantic bond by instilling wholeheartedness. Three theoretical models were analyzed to provide unique insight into an individual's characteristics in a romantic relationship. This was in the hopes that the self in relation to others will be better understood in these approach and avoidant mechanisms.

The sense of self model was used to get a sense of the underlying state of a person's identity. This model included attachment style, resiliency, and self-esteem. Bivariate analyses showed that only resiliency and avoidant attachment were predictive of wholeheartedness. Neither self-esteem nor anxious attachment style was important in determining wholeheartedness. In the multiple regression of the sense of self factors, only resiliency and avoidant attachment style uniquely contributed to the wholeheartedness construct. Our hypothesis that resiliency would positively predict wholeheartedness was confirmed. However, only avoidant attachment was negatively predictive of wholeheartedness so it cannot be said that

a secure attachment style is positively associated with being wholehearted. Avoidant attachment was also twice as large of a predictor than resiliency, showing the importance of attachment style in this phenomenon.

The relationship orientation model was constructed to gain insight into an individual's relationship-contingent behaviors. In the initial bivariate analyses, all of the factors were positively predictive of wholeheartedness, except self-image goals, which supported our hypotheses. In the multiple regression of this model, only trust and compassionate goals were uniquely predictive of wholeheartedness. The partial correlations for both variables were comparative in the sense that neither variable proved to be a stronger predictor than the other. This shows that they are equally predictive of wholeheartedness. It is interesting to note that the partial correlations for these two variables were also comparative in size to resiliency. Only avoidant attachment style was a uniquely stronger predictor of wholeheartedness.

The global personality conceptual model provided insight into how a person's existing dispositional state relates to their relationship orientation. Measures of baseline personality measures, affective states, and a global disposition towards others were included. For both the bivariate analyses and the multiple regression of the model, only communal orientation was positively predictive of wholeheartedness. This shows that one's personality is not as predictive of wholeheartedness as hypothesized; one's orientation towards others and sense of self is more descriptive of this construct.

A model of best fit was then calculated to determine which factors were the strongest predictors of wholeheartedness. Avoidant attachment was the largest partial correlation calculated, with trust as the second largest predictor in the multiple regressions of the conceptual models. These two variables were also the only characteristics to retain their statistical

significance when all three models were analyzed in the same multiple regression. It is interesting to note that when these two factors were included in the same analysis, they were of comparable size. Avoidant attachment was no longer the largest predictor, implicating the importance of trust in a relationship displaying a wholehearted nature. Trust and avoidant attachment style are both equally predictive of wholeheartedness.

This line of research has helped to delineate some of the predictors of wholeheartedness. This includes avoidant attachment as negatively associated with wholeheartedness and trust as a positive correlate of wholeheartedness. Both social desirability and gender were statistically controlled for in each analysis. This shows that these associations were not due to these potential confounding variables; each factor uniquely predicted wholeheartedness on its own accord. These analyses have helped to develop a better understanding and to bolster the construct of wholeheartedness. Preliminary insight was developed into the construct of wholeheartedness by determining which dispositional traits are predictive of this relational approach.

Future Directions

The generalizability of this study is limited to only heterosexual, romantic couples. It would be beneficial to see if these results could be applied to other sexual orientations as well as varying types of interpersonal relationships – familial, platonic, or work-related. This study only included couples from a college population. Therefore, relationships of varying lengths should be included in future analyses. This could be used to see how wholeheartedness changes over time and if the results still withhold. The results are also limited to healthy couples, as seen that few distressed couples could commit to this longitudinal study. It would be interesting to see if these predictors maintain as determinates of wholeheartedness in distressed couples. This is only the

beginning to a further understanding of this phenomenon. Further research is needed to better understand wholeheartedness in romantic relationships.

Table 1*Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Predictors of Wholeheartedness*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Wholeheartedness	3.61	.63
Sense of Self Model		
Self-Esteem	4.01	.79
Anxious Attachment	2.13	.86
Avoidant Attachment	1.68	.59
Resiliency	3.95	.43
Relationship Orientation Model		
Relational Interdependent Self-Construal	3.99	.55
Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem	3.57	0.60
Inclusion of Other in the Self	5.20	1.21
Trust	4.60	.53
Compassionate Goals	4.07	.51
Self-Image Goals	3.01	.67
Global Personality Model		
Big Five Extroversion	3.34	.77
Big Five Neuroticism	2.85	.83
Big Five Openness	3.37	.52
Big Five Agreeableness	3.79	.54
Big Five Conscientiousness	3.45	.62
PANAS-X Positive Composite	3.66	.73
PANAS-X Negative Composite	2.35	.85
Communal Orientation	3.83	.49
Socially Desirable Responding	1.50	.15
Gender	1.50	.50

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